

The Purgatorio, III

The Sixth Canto of the Purgatorio is the last group of the late repenters – those who ignored their spiritual lives because they were too deeply distracted by temporal affairs. In a word, they had no zeal for the kingdom of God.

Zeal can separate souls from going to hell or purgatory, and from those who must stay in the antepurgatory as opposed to those who enter a high level of the place of purification, or even heaven. What is zeal then? Rather than present a definition and explanation, I wish to turn our gaze for this sermon, to Viejo Mexico – to old Mexico starting in 1858.

In that year, Benito Juarez began the first of five terms as the president of Mexico. You can see his image on the walls of Mexican restaurants; Ciudad Juarez is named after him; if you fly into Mexico City you will arrive in Juarez airport. No Catholic can celebrate his life, since his first act as president was to confiscate the Church of San Francisco in Mexico City, to turn it into a Masonic Temple. His presidency began a systematic persecution of the Catholic Church which continues to this day. What accounts for this persecution?

Before I answer that, go back for a moment to a philosophical age in Western Civilization called the Enlightenment. Immanuel Kant said it was “Mankind’s final coming of age, the emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance and error.” That pompous declaration basically meant three things:

1. Remove the influence of religion or God from every aspect of human life.
2. Replace that influence with the influence of science.
3. Transfer all authority away from the Church and away from the family, and give it to the state.

One of the ways in which these Enlightenment principles were put into action was through a collection of secret societies called Freemasonry. Benito Juarez was a freemason, but not the only president of Mexico who was a freemason. For the past 200 years now Mexico has been in the grip – I would say the death grip of Freemasonry. And this grip exacerbates two terrible things which have torn Mexico to pieces, namely poverty and corruption. These afflictions existed in Mexico when it was under the Spanish crown, but Freemasonry and communism have made it far, far worse.

Juarez was a piker however, compared to the persecution of Catholics under President Venustiano Carranza, who in 1915 ordered 160 of the best Catholic priests in Mexico arrested, and after a brief time had them shot. This was horrifying to people all over the world, and to North American Catholics, who complained to then President Woodrow Wilson. This did not bother Wilson in the slightest, since he was a 33rd degree Mason. The U.S. envoy to Mexico at the time was John Lind, who, when he heard about the murders wrote to Wilson, "Great news! The more priests they kill in Mexico the happier I shall be." Lind too was a freemason.

In 1924, President Plutarco Calles formed his own patriotic church, and also funded the construction of 200 Protestant schools – not that he was Protestant, but it was just a way to weaken the Church. He said further, "Now there must be a psychological revolution. We must penetrate and take hold of the minds of the children and the youth because they must belong to the revolution." Catholic schools everywhere were outlawed and then confiscated.

The result was no Catholic schools, no private schools, no home schooling; only public schools with mandatory atheistic indoctrination. A public oath had to be taken, accepting all decrees of the Mexican government. Anyone who refused was either imprisoned or executed. If a priest wore the Roman collar, he would receive a huge fine or imprisonment (by the way, this law was in effect up until the visit of Pope St. John Paul II to Mexico in the 1979).

Anyone who even questioned these laws was subject to five years imprisonment. If you even said *Adios* (go with God) or *si Dios quiere* (if God wills) you were fined or received imprisonment. All churches, monasteries and convents were confiscated by the government. The Church could not own any property, no priest or bishop could administer a church. All religious orders were outlawed. All foreign priests were expelled from the country. If a school even had a religious name, or if there was a statue, it was shut down. All charitable institutions, shelters, hospitals that were Catholic were closed. Concentration camps formed which were packed with Catholics, and in many cases if a Mexican Catholic made the Sign of the Cross, he was shot on sight. All Masses ceased, all sacraments were forbidden. Why did Calles do this? He was a 33rd degree Freemason.

Outside of Mexico, the journal of American Freemasonry called the *New Age*, proclaimed “The Catholic Church has perverted the Mexicans for 400 years. Calles’ merit is to have delivered them from ignorance and superstition, and that is why he can count on our understanding and on North America’s support.” The Scottish Rite Masonic Lodge wrote: “International Masonry accepts responsibility for everything that has happened in Mexico, and is prepared to mobilize all its forces in a methodical integral application of the agreed upon program for this country.” The only country in the world to break diplomatic relations with Mexico was Ireland.

Mexico went from 5,000 priests to 334 in a short time. I won’t go into the many individual stories of the countless martyrs made by this persecution. Suffice it to say that the pastor of one church was hauled outside, and his hands were chopped off. The soldiers who did this while laughing were sure he would be tortured by not being able to say Mass again. They were right, since the priest died of a broken heart some time later.

There were many Catholics who did nothing, since they were lukewarm. They had no zeal before the revolution, and had no zeal during it. To them may apply the condemnation of the Prophet Ezechial, 13.5 “You have not gone up to face the enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in battle in the day of the Lord.” But many did have zeal and many did form a wall, and did stand up to face the enemy. Old men refused to discontinue saying *adios*. Old women prayed their rosaries openly. Boycotts were organized against the railroads to deprive the hated Masons and revolutionaries of their wealth. And from 300,000 Mexican Catholic throats rose up a battle cry which ought to fill us with admiration: *Viva Cristo Rey!* “Long Live Christ the King!”

Many Catholics took up arms, to stop the murders of priests and the torture and imprisonment of the faithful. They were called Cristeros; none of them are still alive. Their military success is legendary, and even though they were not professional soldiers, they could and did defeat the most elite units of the Mexican army. I wish you could read their story and the story of the Mexican martyrs such as the famous St. Miguel Pro, who faced his firing squad with a rosary in one hand and a crucifix in another, and shouted *Viva Cristo Rey!* Or of St. Jose Luis Sanchez del Rio, who was ordered to renounce his faith under pain of death. He refused, and soldiers tore the skin off the bottoms of his feet, and forced him to walk to the cemetery. They gave him one last chance to renounce his faith and live, and he responded by shouting *Viva Cristo Rey!* He was 14 years old.

I hope we will compare what our brethren in Mexico have been through to our tiny penances and discomforts with the fear of disease in these times, and make an intention to stand up for our Blessed Lord and His Church in some way, if only to make the Sign of the Cross at a restaurant before eating.

And to declare this intention, I conclude with a statement from the Catholic apologist Patrick Madrid who wrote the following declaration, called the *Fellowship of the Unashamed*, which is a prayer for holy zeal.

The die has been cast. The decision has been made. I have stepped over the line. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is in God's hands. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, the bare minimum, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, frivolous living, selfish giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, applause, or popularity. I do not have to be right, first, best, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I will live by faith. I will lean on the presence of Christ. I will love with patience, live by prayer, and labor with the power of God's grace.

My face is set. My gait is fast, my goal is heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my Guide is reliable, and my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I will not give up, shut up, let up or slow up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and spoken up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I must go until He comes, give until I drop, speak out until all know, and work until He stops me.

And when He returns for His own, He will have no difficulty recognizing me. My banner is clear: I am a part of the Fellowship of the Unashamed.

Viva Christo Rey!